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SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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THE PREACHER'S COMMISSION.

"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."—MATT. XXVIII., 19, 20.

This represents the end of our Lord's ministry upon earth; and it is familiarly called the commission which he gave to his apostles, by which they were thrice enjoined to become preachers of the Gospel. I have no doubt that in the beginning it was addressed to them exclusively, and for the very obvious reason that there was nobody else with him. They were his companions. This was spoken to them at Jerusalem, over beyond the summit of the Mount of Olives, near Bethany. This was his familiar band that surrounded him. And he commanded them—all that were with him—to go forth and become teachers of the new life, according to the doctrine of the new kingdom.

The right to teach, to administer ordinances, to govern churches, has been supposed to be limited to a very few. It has been supposed that it was a right which inhered in, as it were, a spiritual corporation, and that it was transmissible, and that it was transmitted by definitely authorized parties with the divine sanction; and that no man not specially appointed to it had a right to intrude into the office of the sacred ministry. It has been supposed that men must first be *called* to preach; and that secondly they must be authorized by God's church, through its appropriate officers, to take up the vocation of preaching, having been called to it.

I suppose it is best that an order of men should exist, who shall give themselves exclusively to the work of teaching and preaching religious truths. It is best, however, not on any ground of historic authority; not on the ground on which the church has put it; it is best for the same reason that it is best that there should be an order of men who shall attend to the sick; that there shall be an order of men who shall attend to the administration of law. In other words, division of labor has been found to be wise. The adaptation

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of a man's whole energy to certain special ends makes the accomplishment of those ends more certain, and certain to a better purpose than where they are left to the lower training of all men. Therefore there should be an order of men whose business it is to make known moral religious truth, for that single practical reason—just as schools will be better if there are professional teachers; just as each particular kind of industry will be better if there are men exclusively educated to that kind of industry; just as moral affairs will flourish better if there is an order of men who adapt themselves exclusively to the propagation of moral ideas and moral influences.

There were two reasons why the apostles had this commission given to them. The first I have stated—that they were the only ones who were present. The other reason, which expired with the apostles and which will never come again, was that they went forth in the beginning of the preaching of the Gospel to be witnesses of the life and deeds of Jesus Christ himself. They were *personal* witnesses. And that which gave them authority, in part, as apostles, was that *they spoke that which they knew, and testified that which they had seen.* And so, when Judas fell out of the band, and they were to select another disciple in his place, they selected from among those that had companied with the Lord from the beginning, that being an indispensable condition. And when Paul was selected, he came in by reason of the revelation which was made to him miraculously. And he declared again and again, that he *also, as one born out of due time, had seen the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Now, with the primitive church this part of the apostolic work ceased. No man can now be a witness of the facts which occurred two thousand years ago. No man can put any emphasis at all on that which was one of the most emphatic points in the beginning of the Christian ministry.

It is held by some, that only those have a right to preach who have received permission from that apostolic body which has perpetuated itself historically by the transmission of virtue from person to person clear down to our time. It is held that there inheres in the church both authority and virtue by which men may be set apart to preach the Gospel; and that they who are thus set apart may minister in sacred affairs.

But we believe the Christian ministry to be as open to all men as any other profession in civil society. And there is no more virtue required of a man who becomes a life-long preacher of the Gospel than of a man who becomes a lawyer, a physician, a teacher, or an engineer. No other conditions should be imposed on one than on the others. That is to say, adaptation to the calling is the only es-

sential thing. No man is called to any profession unless he has a capacity for it; and any man is called to whatever profession he is qualified, by his talent and training, to successfully carry on. This is the general law of liberty in society; and the ministry is not an exception to it. The church is not a close corporation. The claim that it is, is invalid and ought to be spurned. It belongs to all. And every man has a right to come personally to God, without the help of priest, or any help, if he can. And it is his own inherent right, it is a right which he derives, not through the church, but by the Holy Ghost, to make known any truth which his heart believes, to go forth and preach it, if he pleases, without ordination.

It is precisely in religious matters as it was in civil matters. There was a time when it was supposed that common men had no civil rights. They were all supposed to be stored in the king. And by mutation it came to be supposed that the rights of men were stored in society, and that society conferred them. But we have now come to a better time; and we hold that there is an inherent right in every man, by virtue of his sonship to God, to all the privileges which any other man enjoys. We hold that the individual receives no rights from government, but that government derives its rights from the individual. And as it is with government, so it is with society. And there is to come a democratic view of the Christian ministry by which it shall be understood that it is not a gift conferred by those who are in authority, upon the common people, but that it is a right which inheres in the piety and relationship of every child of God.

Whoever can preach and wants to preach, may preach, all the world to the contrary notwithstanding. The power to do the work, adaptation to it, and the wish to do it, is enough. Let me see a man's work, and I will tell you whether he is called to the ministry or not.

If I go into a man's studio, and find execrable pictures there, I may be polite enough not to say anything; but if I am compelled by the man's arrogance or vanity to speak, I shall say, "My friend, you have mistaken your profession." "Not at all," he may perhaps say; "you are mistaken in your criticism. I have been to school to all the appropriate artistic authorities; I have been in Rome, and painted there; I have painted in Paris and London, and here in New York; I have credentials from men and institutions all the world over; and do not these things make me a painter?" My reply would be, "The power to make good pictures can make you a good painter, and nothing else can." All the parchments in creation cannot make a man a good painter. And, on the other hand, if a man

paints well he does not need parchments. He has his credentials in his training and drill. And there is no difference between the ministry and any other profession in this respect. He who wants to devote himself to the work of the Christian ministry exclusively, does not need to ask permission of any authority except God's good grace. It is a permission which neither the church nor the hierarchy has the power to grant. To his own master a man standeth or falleth, in the pulpit as much as anywhere else.

Whoever, then, is called, may preach. But what is a call? There are many who suppose it to be a strong impression borne in upon a man from without. There are many who suppose that it is some mighty impression which comes to a man, it may be through a dream; or that in some down-brooding influence which he feels at some meeting, or while he is laboring in the field, and which seems to come right from the clouds upon him.

Far be it from me to say that there are no such impressions or influences, and that they are not of divine origin. They may or may not be, according to the facts. But what I should like to emphasize is, that while these may be included in a call to the ministry, they are not descriptive of it. They are not required in a call to the Christian ministry. Such a call is based on the ground of wise judgments, and not on any mysterious or imaginative impression. That may be an auxiliary, but it is not the characteristic thing. A right judgment it is that calls a man to the ministry.

On what ground, then, is this judgment to be formed? Is there anything more mysterious in forming one's judgment in regard to entering upon the Christian ministry than in regard to entering upon any other vocation? Religion has been supposed to be a mystery. It is no more a mystery than anything else. Religion stands in God's original nature of things, and not in the nature of corrupt schools, or schools of perversion. Religion is provided for in the original constitution of the world, as much as any science, or other element of progress. There are some mysteries; but these are in realms beyond where the human mind reaches. They exist outside of the line where man's knowledge ceases. What we mean by *mystery* is *ignorance*. And so there is mystery in religion, just as there is mystery in every other direction. But in forming one's judgment as to whether he shall be a preacher of the Gospel or not, the mind is to proceed by precisely the same steps, and by the use of precisely the same kind of materials as in forming one's judgment on any other subject.

A man asks himself, "Shall I go into the army?" He instantly raises the question of fitness, of taste, of desire. And as he deter-

mines the facts in regard to these elements, he chooses. A man asks himself, "Shall I devote myself to art?" Immediately the question presents itself, "Have you a taste for it? Are you trained toward it? Do you feel that you have mental qualities which adapt you to it? Do you find that you have the suggestive mind and pliant hand which it requires? Have you the interest and zeal in it which will be likely to give you success?" On those facts you pass judgment, and form a decision. A man asks himself, "Shall I become a sea-faring man?" He thinks of all his chances in life, and selects that pursuit, if at all, for good reasons. "Shall I be a civil engineer? What shall I be?" Men look at themselves, at their opportunities, tastes and adaptations, and then come to their judgments.

Precisely the same thing takes place in regard to the preaching of the Gospel. Personal fitness is the great test.

What, then, are the requisites? First, and far above any other, is a nature adapted to generate moral truths; and a nature which, if educated and stimulated, is qualified to produce impressions of morality upon others. Although men may be comparatively barren in this direction, and although, notwithstanding this, they may have a reasonably successful ministry, because they are wise administrators and managers, yet the ministry is a body of men distinctly called of God to promote moral truth. And there is as much genius for moral thought as for artistic thought, or mathematical thought, or engineering thought. Men inherit or receive certain tendencies in their birth. The prophet Jeremiah declared that he *was called to be a prophet from his mother's womb.* That was the way of expressing it in his day. We should say that he had a constitutional tendency to the profession into which he went. There are men who have a constitutional predisposition to, or inspiration for, equity, veneration, spiritual love, things high and beautiful. There are men whose natures tend toward sympathy and affection and beneficence. And they become God's natural interpreters of moral and spiritual ideas. They are men who have power when they come to impress those ideas upon others. I do not say that every man can be a genius in these things. Each one must look into himself and see if he is a lover of moral ideas. If there is a reasonable probability that a man is adapted to the reception of moral feelings, there is an equally reasonable probability that he will be a fountain out of which these feelings will naturally flow.

Another element is that of having the power to communicate. To be a successful preacher, a man having the King's message must be able to make it known. And this is largely a matter of personal

enthusiasm. There is many a man that is adapted to communicate ideas in a professor's chair, who is not adapted to communicate ideas in the pulpit. That is to say, there is many a man who can give out the truth in dry, didactic, systematic forms, by logical processes, who cannot give it out with a fervor which shall make it efficacious.

In order to preach the Gospel to the masses of mankind, that which one needs, is, first, a solid basis of truth; and second, an inflammatory form of truth which takes hold of men through the imagination; through the emotions—not alone through the logical reason, though that is not to be excluded. If he has that beside, so much the better.

So, if a man finds himself endowed with a strong moral nature; if he finds that he has the gifts of sympathetic communication, he has the foundation on which a call, if there is one, may stand.

A great many persons, it seems to me, have made a mistake, if that is a foundation to a call to the ministry. Many men have come into the ministry who have very few moral ideas, or none at all. They are very barren in that direction. Many men go into the ministry who have no gifts of communication. They cannot speak without writing; and they cannot read well what they do write; and they do not think much when they are writing it. They communicate the rounds of doctrine as they find them in the books. They may do some good in that way; they may administer the services of devotion not altogether without profit; but they are manifestly men who do not bring to their function an original adaptation. So we find hundreds and hundreds of men falling out of the ministry every year because they do not succeed—some who have had bishops' hands laid on their heads, and some who have not. The laying on of hands makes no difference. A good minister is good, if he never had a bishop's hand on his head; and a poor minister is poor, if he has had twenty bishops' hands on his head. If a man has got it in him, he can get it out, and he does not need to ask for favors; but if a man has not got it in him, no favors can be given to him which will enable him to get it out. It is all in a nutshell.

Many men have felt very strongly inclined to go into the ministry,—it seemed to them such a beautiful business! It was such a pleasant life! Ah! we are men of like passions with you. Ministers are proud like other folks. They have temptations in their sphere of life, as well as the business man has in his. And if a minister, lifted above men, did not experience their weaknesses, and have a common sympathy with them, he would not be half a minister. It is because he is bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh, and pas-

sion of your passion, among other things, that he is fitted to be a good preacher of salvation to perishing souls. But multitudes of men think the ministry is such a delightful thing! They think it is so splendid to be set apart from the hurly-burly of life, and to stand before an elect congregation, and to minister the cleanest ideas in the cleanest form, without the wranglings and debates of outward life. And then, it is so respectable! And then, a man who is settled in a good parish is so released from thoughts which harass men in other spheres! And while the living of many men is not certain, he gets his salary regularly. It is a good thing. It is every way respectable and genteel. And a minister is at once admitted into the best society. And so a great many people think they are called to the ministry.

Therefore it is that we find so many men who are without work; so many who are without any call to preach, although they thought they had a call to the ministry. Nobody is called to preach unless somebody is called to hear him. And if, when a man has tried his gifts patiently and faithfully, giving himself time to develop them and make himself fully known, he cannot reach the minds of men, it does not follow that he is not a good man, and good for many things, but it does follow that he is not good for a minister.

I once saw a German professor sitting by the roadside near Cincinnati, breaking stones. He was the son of the Minister of Public Instruction in the kingdom to which he belonged. Being expelled from his own country, he came to this land. He was an honest man, and would rather earn his bread than beg it. He could not find work fitted to his station; so he tried to find work in the department next below his station. He could not find it there; and so he, like a sensible man, took what he could get. And there he sat breaking stones. I noticed that there was a burly Irishman not far from him, who was worth twice as much as he—who could break stones easier, and work longer and better than he. If I had said anything to that professor, I should have said, "You are not fitted for this business"; but it would not have followed that he was not fitted for a higher business. If he had been put in a professor's chair in some academy or college or university, he would have done a great deal better, and might have done well.

So I think it is no discredit to a man to say to say to him, "You are not fit for the pulpit. You have misjudged in the use to which you are putting your talents. You may make a good editor, but not a good preacher. You may make a good professor in a college, or a good physician, or a good merchant, but not a good preacher. You have tried and failed: that is the best evidence of it." It is because men misapprehend the nature of the calling; or it is because

in forming their judgment in regard to their adaptation to the work of the ministry they make a mistake, that there are so many who meet with little or no success in that avocation.

A call to the ministry, then, consists in a personal fitness for the ministry in moral, intellectual, and sympathetic endowment. And whoever is called with these elements, let him go into the ministry. If he prefers to go into a highly-organized, well-regulated church, let him go into what is called *the* church. I mean the Episcopal Church. There are two or three churches—the Roman Church, the Greek Church, and the Episcopal Church; and this last, with its decorous, beautiful services, is admirable; and every man ought to be grateful for it. And let him who is called to the ministry go there if he prefers that form of service. But do not let him deceive himself, and suppose that it was this, that, or the other external thing which put him into the ministry. It was the grace of God, added to what his father and mother gave him in his natural endowments, that put him there. These other things are mere surplusage. Such matters of order and arrangement are good enough in their way, but they are incidental things. The thing itself is, that he was fitted for his work. That is the main point. And if you prefer to go into the ministry without those other incidental things, go without them. They are optional.

Councils are called to ordain and license men to preach. And if a man chooses to be examined by the ministers of his neighborhood, and to be guided by their judgment as to his general adaptation to the work of the ministry, well and good; but have a council of ministers a right to say to a man, "You shall not preach"? No, not in our country. Have they a right to say to a man, "You shall preach," or "You may preach"? No. When they examine a man, and find that his qualifications in regard to character, personal piety, and natural endowment, are such as to fit him for the work, and they say, "We authorize you to preach the Gospel," do they give him a larger liberty than he had before? No. He had as much right to preach before as afterward.

Well, is there no use in a council? Yes. What is it? That is just the question. According to our Congregational view, it is within the province of a council, after having examined a man, to say, "We have looked into the matter of this man's fitness to preach, and we are prepared to recognize him as a minister among us." Otherwise the man would have to go through a probation and give people a chance to find him out by his actual work. Licensing is merely a process by which a man gets letters of introduction into the church. Beyond that it is nothing at all. The right to preach God gave him. No body of men can bestow it upon him. Neither

can any body of men take it away from him. They can say to the churches, "We do not believe in him any longer," but they cannot say to him, "Shut up!"

It does not follow because men have certain gifts which fit them for the sacred calling of the ministry, that they should enter upon that calling. It is not a matter of course that all men who are eminent in their moral tendencies should be pressed into the service as preachers. There is sometimes almost a compulsory influence brought to bear upon men. The mother prays long and earnestly that she may see her son in the pulpit where she desires, above all other places, to see him. But her son is born an artist child. And all the way up, there is the clear shining of the primitive imagination, of the artist nature, in the child. And it is called an *eccentricity*, an *irregularity*. The father fights it; and the mother fights it. It is like fighting light, which comes in at the window, and dances on the carpet. You cannot sweep it up, nor get rid of it. There is nothing to do but to let it shine, as it will shine. The mother and the father have consecrated the child to the ministry, and the child means to become a minister, because his parents wish him to. And so he goes to school, meaning, as he says, to study for the ministry; but he thinks of pictures. He means to preach; but he thinks of pictures. The artistic talent is working in him all the time. He goes through college, saying that he means to be a preacher; and yet he is a natural artist, and wants to make pictures.

Now, it is wrong to put such a man into the ministry. God calls him to something else, and keeps telling him of it; but men say to him, "Be a preacher of the Gospel." My advice to him would be, that he should follow the strong indications in his nature. If a man is drawn toward a profession, let him be a professional man. If he wants exceedingly to be a mechanic, though he be a rich man's son, let him be a mechanic. If God calls you to the shop, you will be a thousand times happier than if you ignore the strongest tendency of your being, and go into something for which you have no adaptations. Thousands of men have chosen professions which are not fitted to them, and have neglected tendencies which, if they had been encouraged, would have made them happy all their days. It is of the utmost importance, in a moral point of view, that a man should work in the line of his strongest noble faculties; that he should not disregard, in his profession, that which God hinted to him in giving him the charter of his being. If a man finds himself far better adapted to mathematical pursuits than to preaching, let him choose them. If there is any vocation of a secular nature toward which a man feels specially drawn, let his profession or career

be in that direction. But if a man has no special predilection, and he has those endowments which fit him for the ministry, there are a hundred reasons why he should choose that.

In determining whether a man shall preach, after the matter of personal fitness is settled, the question to be considered is, What is the relative want in the different departments of society? Where is there the most need of men? And if you look over society to-day, where is there the most need of men? I think there is nowhere in society any great necessity which stands in such crying need of able, strong men, as the pulpit. The law is absolutely overrun, pressed down, shaken together, running over—so much so, that hundreds say that the profession is spoiled. They say that a man cannot get a living legitimately in the law, and must go into some other business, must form outside connections, in order to thrive. Only here and there one succeeds in the law. But the profession is so immensely filled with temptations; the remunerations are sometimes so great; the prospects which it holds out are frequently so promising, that it draws multitudes to it.

It is much the same with the medical profession. There are almost as many doctors as there are patients. The city is full of them. They starve on every corner, all through the land. There are more than can find foot-room. Where can you find a region in all our territory from which the cry comes up, "Send us over physicians: we lack them"? Nowhere. They might say, without irreverence, "Where two or three are gathered together, there are we in the midst of them," all over the land.

Look at the industrial pursuits. How thronged is society with the intensest rivalry in business! We do not need more factories. The pursuits of industry are well served. There is no need of officers of the army. There is no need of farmers. There is no need of mechanics. There is no need of physicians or lawyers. There is a surplus in all these departments.

How is it with the ministry? Hundreds and hundreds of churches are empty. There are hundreds of fields where churches ought to be established. There are large populations to whom the Gospel is not carried. Looking over the community at large, we see that there is a famine in the church, and a pressure everywhere else. Nowhere else is there so great a need of able, devoted, fearless men who are willing to give their lives to the work of usefulness; nowhere else is there such a marked, growing and crying need, as there is in the sacred ministry. And this ought to be a subject of serious consideration with young men who are determining what shall be their life-work. One should not go into the min-

istry merely because there is an opening there, without regard to his fitness for preaching; but if he is fitted for it, and he is situated so that he may go in one direction or another, and he has a moral impulse, and he feels that he will have a reasonable chance of success in the ministry, or through it, it seems to me that he should go in that direction. And it seems to me that there are many young men in this city that are achieving success in worldly callings who ought to withdraw themselves from those callings, and devote their energies to the work of the ministry. And whatever pleasure there may be in worldly pursuits, there is no pleasure in it to be compared with that which is derived from preaching the Gospel to men, simply and fearlessly, for the love of it.

Men seem to think that there are many cares and responsibilities in the Christian ministry. It has many cares and responsibilities; but I do not think it has so many as the other average professions. It uses mainly the noblest faculties of the soul. It deals chiefly with the clearest truths. And although it may not be so fruitful in money as many other callings, there is no calling whose remunerations are greater. The best men that I have known were not poor ministers, but ministers that were poor. But there is such a thing as Christ's disciples—as he said they who followed him should—inheriting houses, lands, all manner of possessions, he whole world. They who give their very soul-life for the salvation of their fellowmen, are caught up into the sympathy of men. They are, as it were adopted.

"I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

Though the average salaries of the ministers of the United States are not over four hundred dollars, taking the country through, I point to the profession of the ministry as a profession that bring up their families, on the whole, with more culture than any other. I point to the profession of the ministry, and say that they contribute more able men to the learned professions than any other profession, and that, on the whole, they have a better thrift. They live as well, they are as prosperous, and I think more so, than any other profession. I believe it is partly the fulfillment of the promise.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things [what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, and wherewithal ye shall be clothed] shall be added unto you."

They trust that promise, and they realize it.

Let no man, then, be deterred from preaching the Gospel because the ministry is an impoverished profession; for though it cannot give you great wealth, you may hope to get from it that which great wealth cannot give—*happiness.*

But, while I advocate strenuously the entrance into the Christian ministry of educated men who intend to make that the business of their life, I think that they should not constitute the whole of the ministerial profession. On the other hand, it seems to me that there are multitudes of men in every community, who are called, not waiting for an education, to be preachers of the Gospel. Not only should there be men who are taken into the ministry by an abbreviated course, as the Methodist church very wisely takes men into the ministry, but there ought to be more lay preaching. Men ought to preach the Gospel who do not make preaching their professions. The judge, the lawyer, the artist, the school-teacher, the physician, the mechanic, the engineer, the day-laborer, whoever has been called to seek his livelihood, and to develop his talents in some secular channel, has a sphere for teaching and for preaching which he ought not to ignore nor to neglect.

In the first place, it is utterly impossible for the population of these whole United States to be supplied with regulation churches and regulation ministers. We shall have immense destitutions, and I know not for how long a time. It it preposterous to think of waiting until we have what is called a thorough educated ministry. It therefore becomes necessary for men to engage, in the intervals of their regular occupations, in the work of preaching the Gospel, who are not highly educated nor ordained Every man in any business who loves God and men, and has opportunities and gifts, should preach—and not occasionally, either, but often. There is no reason why men should not feel it to be a part of the duty of every week to make known somewhere the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. If you have the power to do it, who has exonerated you from the obligation of doing it? Are we not to speak of that love which has made life radiant to us? Are we to hold commerce with hope immortal, and keep that hope a secret from others? Are we to be inspired from day to day by the mightiest truths of creation, and shall there be no echo of them sounded out to others? It is your business, being a Christian, to *let your light so shine that men, seeing your good works, shall glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

There are spheres which no minister can reach. What can I do, going into Wall Street, and into the banks, and brokers' offices, to preach the Gospel—that is, to make application of it to the special trials and temptations of men there? They have their peculiar weakness and dangers, and if I go and preach to them the theology and ethics of the pulpit, there is in my preaching a want of adaptation to their case. I lack a knowledge of their circumstances, and therefore cannot sympathize with them in those circumstances. And

they say to me, "We respect your desire and effort to do us good, Mr. Beecher, but you never stood where we do, and therefore you cannot know what we have to contend with."

When a man like Daniel Drew goes into a broker's shop, and preaches, he can do what I could not do. Here I can do what he could not; but among his own kind, among sinners with whom he is in sympathy, he has a message that I could not carry. And so in every profession or business there are men who have, or ought to have, a message for those in that profession or business, which it would be out of my power to deliver. Every person who has a saving hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, and who is a child of light and love, has a message and nourishment for those around about him, and can do for them what I cannot. As the father and the mother in the family can do for the children what no other person can, so in every profession and in every business there are men who can do for their fellows what can be done by nobody else, and can save some who otherwise must be undone. Nobody else can preach such things as he can. His sphere may be limited, and the occasions may only come at intervals; nevertheless, there is a call of God to him to preach.

The lawyer, among squabbling contestants, has a sphere in which he may bring home lessons of peace and love which no other man has. The doctor, in the sick room, taking the hands of emasculated young men who are destroying their life by vice—what counsel, what warning, what saving truth, might he not pour into their needy ears! Here is society opening opportunities for relieving different and constantly recurring wants; and one man can supply one element of the Gospel here, another man can supply another element there, and every man has some level where he can work as no one else can. And do you who have faith in Christ, and make a profession of religion, bear a hope of salvation for yourselves, and never speak of it to men who are dying around you for the lack of it?

I think there is nothing more striking than the unused strength, the latent and undeveloped power, in the church to-day There are many churches whose strength does not lie in the pulpit. There are many churches where the pews surpass, in moral power and efficiency, the pulpit. There are many members of some churches who are more competent to instruct the minister than the minister is to instruct them. And it seems to me that the church has a right to edify itself by the gifts of all its members.

In meetings, those accustomed to speak, emotive and imaginative persons, persons that are excitable, do the talking; whereas, the man of thought, the man of patient investigation, the man who has

reaped the field of life, and is full of valuable experience, sits silent, a year, five years, ten years. He never opens his mouth. He is a granary full of corn, not a single kernel of which is dropped into the ground. It comes in silent, it stays silent, and goes out silent, and does not propagate itself. And there is many a man of ample resources who keeps those resources to himself. Is that right?

Do you say, "I have no call"? Why have you not a call? You are like one who puts his fingers in his ears, and then says, "I do not hear anything. Is it not a call that you have the power to speak? Is it not a call that there is the need of speaking? Is it not a call that you are in the church to be edified by all its members, and that the church has a right to your sympathy and power?

It does not follow that you are to attempt to make long speeches; but in some way there is to be testimony from you in the church. The lay members are not faithful to their duty in this respect. They do not preach, in the church, out of the church, in Bible-class, and Sunday-schools, in jails, and hospitals, in the car, in the field, where there is no social adaptation, and where is no Sabbath bell, or preacher, as they ought to do. They are competent to stand up and utter the right word in the right place; and yet they say nothing. How many men there are who are well-informed, influential, powerful, and yet do nothing, because they are not regulation ministers!

The call to preach lies in the ability, and in the heart that sympathizes with God and man; and we shall never have full-power preaching so long as we depend upon professional ministers. For they bear the same relation to the whole church that the superior officers in the army do to the whole army. And as the rank and file must fight, so the great body of the church must witness and testify. And when there is a living power in the whole church, we shall find, not only that the Gospel will have free course to run and be glorified, but there will be such an education in it that those who preach will become better and better Christians, and nobler and nobler testimonials of the very doctrines which they preach.

It only remains that I should say a word to parents, and those who are rearing the young. It is high time that we should go back again to the example of the mother of Samuel, that our children may be brought up from the cradle with a higher ideal of moral life.

If you ask me how I became to be a preacher, I reply, that I never knew anything else. I found it all cut out for me when I grew up. The mother who bore me expected that I would be a preacher. I learned, with inexpressible emotion, late in life, that she had ordained me, with much prayer and many tears, to be a foreign missionary. That part of her desire never was fulfilled; but

that I was to be a minister, that all her children were to be ministers—of that she had no more doubt than she had of her own faith in Christ. I found, too, that my father was expecting it; and I had no more doubt of it than he had—after my boyhood was passed, I mean. I went through all the dreams of boys who intend, first or last, to be stage-drivers, and midshipmen, and captains and generals, and what not; but as soon as I began to touch real manhood, the very atmosphere was such that I felt called to preach. There were seven of my father's sons in all, and every one of them preached. One or two of them tried to escape, but they gave up the trial after a little while. My youngest brother chose the sea after going through college; but he relinquished it, and went to preaching. He went on ship-board and made himself ready to take command; but father's prayers were too much for him and pulled him to the shore. And he is preaching now. And that influence which prevailed in my father's family, was a legitimate household influence.

Take not the poorest and weakest ones of your flock, and say, "Being good for nothing else, we will make ministers of these." Take those of your children who are strong and deep—the strong-built and the deep-built; take those who are able to carry their keels through deep waters, and make ministers of them. The church needs them. The times need them. Begin with them at the morning of their life: not to weary them; not to disgust them with importunity, but to teach them to take sight of all questions of life along the line of moral truth, which is the highest wisdom. Bring up your children to preach, that they may raise aloft the banner of Christ and carry it, as his faithful champions, through life. May God raise up some from out of this congregation, who shall be earnest and efficient preachers of the Gospel.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We thank thee, our Father, that we are permitted to draw near to thee. Though thou art invisible, yet we feel thy presence. Our hearts respond when thou, by thy Spirit, dost move upon us. Though the eye cannot discern thee, though we hear no voice, though we reach forth the hand in the darkness, and there is none that we can find, yet we know that thou art present. There is the witness of thy Spirit with ours. There is that in us which rises up unbidden of ourselves. There is communion by which we enter into the secrets of the life to come, and are refreshed more than by our own will, or by our own thought, or by anything that is in us. We rejoice to believe that thou art communicable; that thou dost with infinite condescension bow down thyself to our wont; that thou dost follow us with thy nature and surround us with thy presence; that we are buoyed up, and borne upon thy being as ships are carried upon the great deep.

So, in thy mightiness, in the grandeur of thy being, in thine infinite sufficiency, we find our weakness and our ignobleness remedied, and all our wants supplied. And we rejoice that thou art our Father. We do not humble ourselves when we are humble before thee. We bow down before thee without disgrace. We confess our sins to thee. We soar yet, notwithstanding the poignant shame which we should have in the face of men. Better and purer thou art than all others. Nowhere except in thy presence is there such hatefulness of sin. Nowhere else is there such discord of wrong things as in thine ear. And yet, nowhere else is there such lenience, such forbearance, such consideration, such delicacy. Nowhere else is there such all-suffering love.

How wonderful is that forgiveness which thou dost mete out, thou that forgettest nothing; thou that dwellest forever in the presence of all knowledge! And yet thou dost forget our iniquities, so that they are sunk as the stones in the sea; so that they are hidden from memory. They are as if they never were, to thee. How wonderful is thy mercy! How great is thy magnanimity! How far beyond our reach or meditation is that grandeur of thy nature by which thou art out of thine excellence planting in us excellences that we need! And yet, why dost thou wait so patiently? Only because thou art God. How art thou the Guide of our life! Thou dost direct our conduct. Thou art greater than we in the direction of goodness. Thou art more tender than the tenderest. Thou art more gentle than the gentlest. Wonderful as is thy power, vast as is the sweep of thy being and the realm in which thou art moving, nowhere among men is there so much of graciousness and long-suffering and patience as with thee. We, because we are common sinners, we because we are ourselves weak, are in sympathy with the weak; but why dost thou, who art lifted up in the grandeur of thine own estate, have compassion upon the poor and the needy? This it is to have divine nature.

And now we pray that we may more and more think of thee as divine in goodness and mercy and graciousness. We thank thee that these have not been expended upon us vainly, but that goodness and mercy and graciousness are always at work, and have built us up into righteousness. Thou art not content that we shall stand still and then be shined upon with happiness; thou art ministering to us, by thy love and by thy benevolence, many chastisements. Pains run to and fro and every whither, throughout thy domain. But mercy is the attribute of God. And everywhere thou art administering throughout the heaven and throughout the earth, for the upbuilding, for the edifying, for the perfection, of those who are thine.

We are glad that so many have reached the estate of the blessed. We

are glad that of those who have gone home from among us there are so many who have sat in these seats with us; so many who have sung together these hymns; so many who have prayed and rejoiced together here; so many who have triumphed over death, and are at rest with the people of God in heaven. And we thank thee that there are so many more whose faces already shine with the coming light, and that so many of us are drawing near to the line and bound of departure, and looking over, yea, and inhaling the very atmosphere of the other side by foretaste.

And we pray that we may be prepared to live, and be prepared to die. Grant that there may be nothing in this life which shall be so sweet to us that we shall not rather be with Christ, which is better than life. And may we not be so weary of life here that we shall desire to depart. May we await thy righteous will.

And now, grant thy blessing to rest severally upon all that are gathered together in thy presence to-night. Even with the richest blessings of the Son of God, endow them. The indwelling of thy Spirit grant unto them. The fruition of thy people may they have in their heart.

We pray that thy word may be expounded for the edification of those who listen. May we rejoice together in sacred hymns. May we rejoice in common communion with thee in hope and faith and expectation.

And grant, we pray thee, that thy kingdom may come, and thy will be done in all our land. May churches be built in waste places. May there be men who shall spend their lives in making known the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ. We pray that thy work may be carried forward in the islands of the sea, and in the dark places of the earth; and that there may be those everywhere, throughout the bounds of the earth, who shall make known the cause of Christ. And may they be strengthened. May they see that their labor is not in vain.

Advance thy banner. Come, thou that bearest victory, and consummate thy work, and let the whole earth see thy salvation. And to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, shall be praises evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon the word of exhortation. Grant, we pray thee, that it may inspire thoughtfulness. May there be many who shall inquire whether they have done their whole duty to their God and their fellowmen. May none wrap their talents in a napkin. May all consider what use they shall put their powers to. We pray that thou wilt inspire men with wholesome thought and a new spirit. May every family be a church; and may every parent be a priest; and in love may households be brought up; and may many come forth who shall carry Christian effort and example into all professions and pursuits of life; and may there be many who shall go forth as ministers of the word, and who shall be valiant in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray that thou wilt revive thy churches everywhere. And in this church, especially; in the heart of its pastor and in the hearts of its members; in all our schools and colleges; and among the poor and necessitous as well as among the prosperous, grant that cleansing, inspiring Spirit by which we shall live a life unto God. Hear us in these petitions, and answer us, through Christ the Beloved. *Amen.*

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